

Now It's Your Home, John and Christine

by Doris McLeod

John Speek remembers driving home after being turned down by a bank, thinking that it was foolish audacity to expect that a real house on a plot of land was possible for his family: He should give up. Nevertheless, on January 17th his new home was bursting at the seams with well-wishers as Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity celebrated and dedicated 53 L Street in Turners Falls.

The number of individuals, groups, and businesses that make a Habitat home possible is awe-inspiring by any measure. Christine Speek joked that she felt like she was at the Oscars and wanting to thank everyone – and she had quite a list. But mostly John and Christine viewed the occasion as an answer to prayer. And everyone there prayed and sang with them.

The prayers of blessing were offered by Elder Ison, Clarissa Allen, and President Martin Ricks of the Church of Latter Day Saints in Greenfield. Gifts of a Bible and Dare to Repair were presented by the Speeks' PVH mentor, Jocelyn Croft.

A special, surprise gift of a cordless drill was presented on behalf of the construction volunteers by site supervisor Gary Snyder. They had taken up a collection to buy the tool for John, who had worked along side the volunteers for hundreds of hours. They realized he would miss having the tools in his basement that all the volunteers had brought for the job.

(continued on page 2)



Quinn Speek in her new room

Cindy Caplice at The Heart of PVH

by Betty Von Klemperer

In 2007, when Cindy Caplice approached Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity hoping for some volunteer work, she was immediately snapped up, put on the Board, and made chair of the Family Selection Committee.

And no wonder! Cindy brought with her years of professional experience. In 2007, after twenty years directing human resources for two Franklin County companies, she took a position in the business office of the Franklin County Technical School. But public service attracted her, especially after she'd attended a Habitat Raise the Roof Breakfast.

Cindy's responsibilities as chair of Family Selection Committee are various. She is the first major contact person representing Habitat to home applicants. Some of the applicants are selected to become homeowners and she is their guide through the approval process until they are offered "partnership" and receive their Habitat partnership. Several times a year she runs information sessions in Franklin and Hampshire Counties to spread the word about Habitat's activities and distribute facts about the requirements and benefits of becoming a Habitat family. With the rest



Cindy (left) and Jean Miller share a laugh at the annual retreat

of her committee she goes over all the applications for Habitat houses, singling out candidates that seem to meet the requirements. These are interviewed by two members of the Committee, who also visit them in their present homes.

All this, says Cindy, highlights the need for affordable housing. Nevertheless, many first-time applicants don't meet Habitat's requirements, often for financial reasons. Cindy must then send them denial letters, which she tries to make as positive as possible, suggesting ways in which requirements could eventually be met.

But what joy it is to tell applicants they've been accepted! Cindy says that informing the Speek family that they would become a Habitat family "was the best phone call of my life!" Last month John and Christine Speek and their three children moved into their own

neat gray house in Turners Falls, an event marked by one of Habitat's almost wedding-like celebrations.

Cindy herself has had reason to celebrate: on June 27, 2008 she married Byron Caplice, a Greenfield attorney who shares her interest in community service.